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National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor

Testimonial meeting to Adolph Lewisohn on his...

[New York]

[1919?]

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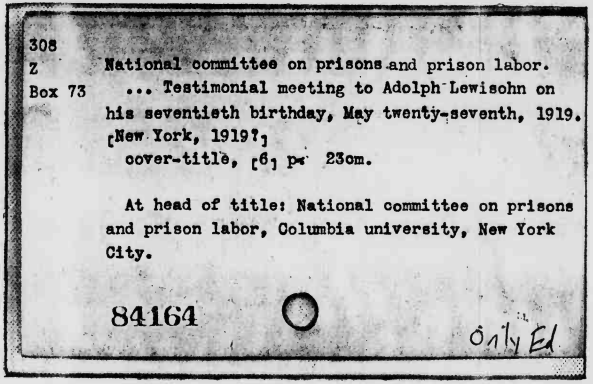

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PRISONS
AND PRISON LABOR

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - NEW YORK CITY

TESTIMONIAL MEETING

TO

ADOLPH LEWISOHN

ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

MAY TWENTY-SEVENTH

1919

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PRISONS AND PRISON LABOR

TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS

ADOLPH LEWISOHN
President

PERLEY MORSE
Treasurer

FREDERICK A. GOETZE
Treasurer and Comptroller, Columbia University, New York.

COLONEL JOHN H. WIGMORE
Dean, Law School, Northwestern University, Chicago.

JOHN J. MANNING
Secretary - Treasurer, Union Label Trades Department, American Federation of Labor.

E. STAGG WHITIN
Chairman, Executive Committee, National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor.

COMMITTEE ON ARRANGEMENTS

GEORGE GORDON BATTLE
MRS. FRANCIS MCNEIL BACON
MRS. R. J. CALDWELL
HERBERT S. CARPENTER
MRS. THOMAS L. CHADBOURNE, JR.
WILLIAM HAMLIN CHILDS
R. FULTON CUTTING
MRS. MARSHALL FIELD
DWIGHT MORROW
MANNY STRAUSS
WILLIAM H. WADHAMS

31 March, 1920. C.R.W.

TESTIMONIAL MEETING
TO
ADOLPH LEWISOHN
ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

FROM MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
OF THE
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PRISONS AND PRISON LABOR

HEATHER DELL FARM, ARDSLEY, NEW YORK

MAY 27, 1919

GEORGE GORDON BATTLE
Chairman

"Mr. Lewisohn is pitilessly insistent on showing faith by works. We, therefore, determined to do something in honor of his seventieth birthday which would show our interest in the work which is nearest to his heart and which would be in the line of promoting and carrying forward that work. As prison work has been one of the dominating interests of his life, we determined that something which would carry forward the work of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor would be most appropriate, and we have raised a fund which we present to him to-day to be devoted to the work of this Committee."

Presentation of Fund and Testimonial Book

ACCEPTANCE BY ADOLPH LEWISOHN

"We are not necessarily working for the prisoner. We are working for the public which has to suffer if the prisoner is not properly treated while in prison. In 1917, some 467,000 persons were discharged from penal and correctional institutions throughout the United States. Is it not absolutely necessary for the welfare of the public that these discharged prisoners should not spread disease, either mentally or physically? There has been considerable improvement during the past ten years in prison conditions for much of which Mr. Thomas Mott Osborne must be given credit.

"I want to specially emphasize at this time what the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor is working for. We have been consistently fighting the contract system of convict labor. It has been no easy fight, but we have been able to get many States to abolish this system. We stand for the indeterminate sentence; for the psychiatric examination and classification of all prisoners; for work which affords industrial training to the prisoner and for which he receives wage, based on the rate of wage prevailing in the community, and from which he pays his board to the State. In brief, we put the emphasis on the fact that the prisoner does return to society and that he must be fitted to conform to the standards of the community, both for his own sake, and for the sake of those among whom he must live. I want especially to bring to your attention one phase of the prison problem which calls for active and continued effort—the County jail, which is a menace to society—must be abolished."

ADDRESSES

DR. HASTINGS H. HART

"Mr. Lewisohn has asked me to speak on that phase of the prison problem which seems to me the crux of the whole prison problem—the County jail.

"Sixty-five per cent. of the persons who are confined in county jails are innocent. Many of them are material witnesses detained until the conclusion of the trial of some other persons suspected of crime, and often these completely innocent persons suffer punishment more severe than is dealt out to hardened criminals. Many other inmates of county jails are persons awaiting trial, who, according to the Constitution, are presumed to be innocent until convicted.

"In some states the county jails are used to confine persons awaiting commitment to an asylum for the insane. The injustice of this is obvious, for the jails have no provision for taking proper care of such patients.

"I should like to see the day when those who have been convicted of crime will be kept completely out of the jurisdiction of the county and placed on prison farms operated by the state. Then innocent witnesses, and persons presumed to be innocent, because they have not been convicted, would be kept from association with convicts. Special houses of detention should be built for those who have committed no crime. When this is done the county jail will vanish."

MR. H. V. KALTENBORN

"When I first became associated with Mr. Lewisohn and heard him talking about prison reform, I thought, 'Oh, yes, prison reformers. What can they do about reforming prisoners? Jailbirds are jail-birds; they must be punished; that is all there is about it.' But, due to Mr. Lewisohn's arguments and to visits to prison with him, I have gradually been persuaded almost against my will, and to-day I stand before you as a contributing member of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor."

MR. WILLIAM HAMLIN CHILDS

"It seems to me the great thing in regard to Mr. Lewisohn's life has been this: It has been a great example of what can be done in America by a man with industry and with brains; first, in the accumulation of money; and, second, carrying, with that accumulation, the gentle, loving spirit, the love of humanity in the disposition of that money which is a greater thing to do."

MR. ROBERT J. CALDWELL

"The doctrine of Mr. Lewisohn to which I can subscribe, and which I have practised on every possible occasion, and which he has practised on me, is to make others work. He has made me work harder than most people succeed in doing, but it has been a work always cheerfully done and under continued inspiration because of his ever-present help and guidance."

DR. FREDERICK A. GOETZE

"Mr. Lewisohn claims me as one of his comrades in prison reform work. It was at a meeting which we both attended several years ago that Mr. Lewisohn first aroused my interest in prison work, and ever since that time I can say with Mr. Caldwell that Mr. Lewisohn has succeeded in making me work as he does all who come in contact with him, through the force of his inspiration alone."

JUDGE WILLIAM H. WADHAMS

"The purpose of the administration of the criminal law is to protect society against the commission of crime. Now, crime is a varying thing in various parts of the world and in various ages of the world and even in different states of the world. I would advise you that if you are contemplating the committing of some particular crime that appeals to your fancy, that you look over the laws of the different states and pick out the state where it may be done with the least harm and disadvantage to you hereafter, for there is a great diversity not only in the definition of crimes but also in the treatment and care of prisoners. This is one instance of work for this Committee to do; and it does it in all the fields of activity for the protection of society.

"The great motive power that has kept the work of the Committee going has been Mr. Lewisohn. We speak of Thomas Mott Osborne's great contribution to the age. Whereas before, we had our minds intent upon catching men and putting them in jail, Mr. Osborne pointed out the fact that men coming out of jail to mingle with society must be helped. Mr. Lewisohn, with his broad vision, immediately saw what a wonderful message that was, and got behind Mr. Osborne and helped and aided him in his work, so that it was possible for Mr. Osborne to do much that otherwise he could not have done."

DR. E. STAGG WHITIN

"I will only speak briefly of the prison message which I took with me from the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor to the Peace Conference. The world, which is attempting to break itself from its bonds and its prisons, has heard our message. The American Federation of Labor sent over a delegation headed by Mr. Samuel Gompers. When I met Mr. Gompers on his first morning in Paris, he said:

> *"'You represent the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor in the solution of the labor problems we are facing. Your Committee must play its part and you must represent the prisoners, not only the half a million in the United States, but the millions of prisoners in all the countries of the world.'*

"I did not know then that President Wilson would call on Mr. Gompers, and indirectly on our National Committee to participate in the great International Labor Conference. We met through thirty-six sessions, and the fundamental idea of our National Committee was not only stamped on the result, but carried into the main thought of the labor charter of the world. The first clause reads that human labor shall not be considered as a commodity or article of commerce. This thought of preventing exploitation has underlain much of our work. It may interest you to know that the argument for this first clause—the only bill of rights, as it were, written into the peace proposals of the Allies—was made by the representative of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor. Associated with this idea was the argument for wage and for justice for the prisoner, a thought which every one of those sitting at the labor conference has promised to apply in their own country.

"I want to point out to you that in a world which is aflame, a world which is seething, in which people lose their heads and men will have to be put in jail, the question of the prisons of the world and the methods of taking care of the prisoners and of working the prisoners is fundamental to the working out of uniform justice. This is being realized. And, I must confess, after studying the conditions in England and in France, after having consulted with the university authorities upon this subject, that the only real, driving scientific force which the world possesses upon this subject is the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor. Our responsibility is to show here and now what is just and right and translate it into administration, not only in New York State, in the United States, not only in England, France and Germany, but in far-off Japan, China and the islands of the seas. It is our responsibility; it is our opportunity. But we cannot do it unless we solve the problem for ourselves right here and make sure that our answer is right."

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